

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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## A HISTORY

OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM.

Ending with the passing of the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act, in the month of March, 1817.

Addressed to

Mr. John Goldsmith, of Hambledon, and Mr. Richard Hinxman of Chilling,

Who were

The Chairman and Secunder at the Meeting of the People of Hampshire, on Portsdown Hill, in the month of February, 1817, to Petition for a redress of grievances, and for a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament.

## LETTER V.

*On the Green Bag Plots and Report.*

*On the conduct of certain individuals relative to these. On the Renewal of the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act. On the question, whether this Act will ever cease.*

North-Hampstead, Long-Island,  
August 7, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

I now approach towards the conclusion of the history of those measures, which, I trust, will, hereafter, become a subject of solemn investiga-

tion, at a time when men shall dare to speak and to write the truth.

We have before seen what extraordinary pains were taken to prepare the way for those measures. First, there were the everlasting paragraphs in the Courier, and such like newspapers, including the writings in that sanguinary publication, The Quarterly Review, conducted by the renegado SOUTHEY, and the hireling WILLIAM GIFFORD. These paragraphs and articles written by, or dictated by, those who wished to adopt the measures, *called upon the Government* for the adoption of them; and *chided* the Ministers for their *tardiness* in not having adopted vigorous measures sooner; just in the same way that the creatures of the bloody tyrant, RICHARD THE THIRD, chided him for his tardiness in usurping the Crown. These vile writers; these execrable tools of the Boroughmongers; these murderers of their country's freedom; these bravos in the cause of despotism, who must answer for their deeds whenever the day of justice shall arrive, stuck at no falsehood in point of fact, at no sophistry in point of argument, at no consideration whatever, with regard to the means which they recommended to be employed. They recommended the going much farther than was necessary even for their own purposes. The audacious wretches

were for direct slaughter; knowing very well, that in order to make the way smooth for a mile, the guide must push on a mile and a half. We have got nothing, but perpetual imprisonment at pleasure, and these sanguinary monsters recommended death at pleasure.

Next came the SPEECH of the Ministers, put into the mouth of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, close upon the heels of which came the speeches, not of the Ministers and of their political adherents, but of those, or, at least, many of those, who are called the OPPOSITION, and who did every thing that lay in their power to give the colour of justice and of reasonableness to those measures which they well knew were about to be proposed. Last of all came those MEMORABLE COMMITTEES of the two Houses; rather than forget one man of whom, we ought to wish to forget our own names, and to be deprived of the faculty of distinguishing which is our right hand, and which is our left. Of the *manner of choosing* these committees I gave at the time a very distinct account; and, indeed, I clearly showed to the whole nation, that the committees were chosen entirely by the Ministers themselves. And, yet, the hirelings of the press have had the barefaced impudence to pretend, that there was great *impartiality* observed in the forming of those Committees: because, forsooth, "*some of the gen-*

*lemen opposite*" were put upon those Committees; *Opposite* indeed! Aye, opposed to the Ministers and their supporters as far as regards a contest for power and profit; but going cordially with them, and even surpassing them, if possible, in hostility to the just claim of the People to be represented truly and fairly in the Parliament. Amongst these "*gentlemen opposite*," were LORDS GRENVILLE, BUCKINGHAM, and FITZWILLIAM, in the one House; and, in the other, Lord MILTON, Mr. PONSONBY, SIR ARTHUR PIGOT, and some others. Look at these Lords and gentlemen. Look at their sinecures, and those of their relations and dependants. Look at the seats which those in the Lower House fill. Look at the means by which they are returned to that house. Look at all these, and then, if you can, express a suitable degree of indignation against the literary ruffians, who have pretended that the Ministers chose upon this Committee persons opposite to their own way of thinking.

However, I wish clearly to be understood, that I do not believe the result would have been very different if the committees had been chosen by *real* ballot, as common jurymen are chosen; for, if there were such an immense majority to vote for the measures without seeing any evidence at all, why should not there have been a similar majority of a committee to recommend those measures? Nay, not-



withstanding there were many men to vote, and to speak against the measures when proposed, I am sincerely of opinion, that there were not, in the two Houses, more than six or seven men, who, at the bottom of their hearts, did not rejoice at the adoption of those measures. But if only one of these six or seven had by any accident found his way into one of the committees, the reports would not have been unanimous; the surprising and happy *harmony* of the thing would have been disturbed a little. Thus, then, were the people of England, and Scotland, and Wales, wholly deprived of every thing bearing the semblance of liberty; the whole of their persons were placed at the absolute disposal of the ministers, to all intents and purposes short of instant death; thus did the "noble lords" and "honourable gentlemen" place us all as much at the mercy of the ministers as the sheep and the dogs of those noble lords and honourable gentlemen are at their disposal, short of the infliction of instant death; and this they did, too, without one particle of evidence laid before them to establish any proof against the people, or to afford any presumption of even a probable necessity for measures of force of any degree. Let these facts, O Englishmen! be inscribed so deeply upon your hearts, that nothing but the hand of death can efface them; and, let it be the first of

your duties to inscribe them upon the hearts of your children.

Wonderful was the despatch to act upon these precious reports before the boiling indignation of the people would give them time to reflect for a moment on the mode of opposing them, and of showing their injustice. Swift, however, as was the hand that was smiting the liberties of the country, it was not swift enough completely to prevent an exposure of the reports. Amongst other things that the parliament was destined to do, was that of passing these laws, upon reports, the absolute falsehood of parts of which, and of the *most material* parts of which, ample proof was tendered in both Houses, quite early enough to produce a revision of the reports before any of the bills were passed.

It would be useless to enter into a minute examination of the whole of these reports; suffice it to say, that they turned upon two principal points, namely, that the reformers in a body, and particularly that their clubs, and societies, were *closely connected*, not only in their operations, but in their views, with the *societies of Spenceans*; and, secondly, that the *insurrection*, as it was called, of the second of December, was an insurrection began and carried on by the *reformers* as well as by the *Spenceans*. These were the two points upon which the reports principally turned; because, against the

reformers, taking separately, it would have been impossible, one would have thought, for the tormentor of *Job*, or, for even a crown *lawyer*, to call for coercive laws. It was, therefore, necessary, so to *connect* the reformers with the Spenceans, as to give a colour to the conclusion, that they both had, at bottom, the same *objects in view*; that is to say, an universal confiscation of real property, and a subsequent distribution of it amongst the people at large. Now, it was offered to be proved at the bar of both houses by Mr. CLERY, and at the bar of both houses by Mr. HUNT. that, as far as they went to give colour to the above conclusion, the reports in both houses were wholly destitute of truth. The petitions of these gentlemen, which were published in my Register of the first of March last, will remain as ever lasting proofs against those reports, as far as related to these principal points; and, I anxiously hope that those two gentlemen will yet be called upon to give proof of their having delivered in those petitions. Since my departure from England, the grand jury of the city of Norwich, together with the mayor of that corporation, have given on their oaths and under their hands, A DIRECT CONTRADICTION, to a particular, a distinct, and an important fact stated in those reports; and, yet, hear it, and remember it, Englishmen, to your last breath; it was upon these

two reports, contradicted as they were by petitions upon their tables, and invalidated as they were, by the tender of evidence to prove their falsehood, that the two houses proceeded to place the very persons of us all at the absolute will of the ministers of the day. The other measures which they had adopted upon these reports were of themselves sufficiently terrible, but, this is the great deed which you ought to keep in mind, and to remember that this deed was committed in consequence of reports, such as I have above described.

Now, my friends, put it to your own hearts: could either of you have sit silent while the petitions of Mr. CLERY and Mr. HUNT were before the house of commons? Sir FRANCIS BURDETT may say, that he *did not want* the people of Westminster to elect him, and if any body have a mind to believe him, when he so says, that can be no business of mine. He may say that he was forced to go to the house of commons; but, if it had happened that either of you had been forced to go there in his place, the question I put to you is this, could you have sit there *silent*, unless you had been struck dumb all at once, while Mr. HUNT's petition was lying upon the table, and while no effort was made to charge it home against the report, upon which the liberties of the people were in a few hours to be taken away. I think



neither of you could: I think that if every word had brought a new blister upon your tongue, you would have cried out against the outrageous injustice of depriving the people of their liberties, until, at any rate, the evidence tendered by this petitioner had been heard at the bar. What! shall we be told of any personal dislikes that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT might have had to Mr. HUNT? If he had any such, and had good reasons for them, it is natural to expect that they would have been stated. But, at any rate, there was Mr. HUNT, *a petitioner*; he was the person who had taken the active part at the Spafields meetings; he came forward with an explicit declaration, that, if permitted to do it, he would bring evidence to the bar to prove many most interesting and most important facts, and to negative completely one of the great assertions of the committee. Was it the duty of the house to hear him, or was it not? If it was; if that be your opinion, my friends, can you find out a justification for Sir Francis Burdett in sitting still as a mouse, in not making one single effort to cause this evidence to be called to the bar, and not one single effort to expose the conduct of those who refused to hear this evidence? It is no apology to say, that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT disliked the petitioner, especially if that dislike was of very recent origin, and could not be very easily accounted for, and that, too, upon

grounds fair and just. But, in no case could that dislike be an apology for that conduct. There lay the petition; its allegations were most important to the cause of the people; and, not to use his utmost efforts to give effect to that petition, was to act the part of a lawyer who should suffer his client's cause to go to ruin, merely for fear of its success doing credit to a person whom he himself disliked.

But, this was not the first instance in which Sir Francis BURDETT had thrown a damp, or, at least, had endeavoured to throw a damp, upon the right of petition. I do not mean upon the theory of that right; upon the general doctrine of that right; but upon the real practical utility of it. All the nation remembers the petition of the boy DOGOOD, which was presented to the House of Commons by my Lord FOLKESTONE, and to the House of Lords by my Lord THANET, which latter also presented a petition upon the same subject to the House of Lords from Mr. HUNT. Both these petitions, Sir Francis Burdett declared to be *such as the Houses could not receive*; though my Lord FOLKESTONE hesitated not one single moment, nor did my Lord THANET; and though both Houses received the petitions, without one single word of objection from any quarter. Nay, the petition of Mr. CLERY was, I heard it publicly declared, presented against the judgment of Sir Francis Burdett;

though, to this hour, that petition remains to be cited by every body, as a most triumphant answer to the report of the House of Lords. What sort of conduct was this, then? Let us not flinch from stating these truths due to the injured nation. We had, as we thought, and as we boasted, *one* man at least in Parliament, who would dare to defend our cause. He having abandoned that cause, it is absolutely necessary for us, in justification of ourselves, to accuse him of that abandonment. If we neglect to do this, we tacitly acknowledge that we were unworthy of being defended, which would be most basely, as well as most senselessly, to offer ourselves up as a sacrifice to him who has abandoned us.

You will please to bear in mind, that it was not a *favour* that we were asking of Sir Francis BURDETT; it was a duty that we expected him to perform. Not a duty towards any particular individuals; but a duty towards the whole of the Reformers; for if he will have it that he has been *forced* to be a member of Parliament, as some gentlemen are *forced* to be bishops; still it was clearly understood on both sides, that he was to be the unshaken supporter of Parliamentary Reform. This was the very ground upon which he was so *forced*—if forced it must be called; and, therefore, not to give us his support, was to

betray his trust, especially after he had signed a paper inviting Parliamentary deputies to assemble in London, and after he had signed another paper, commissioning that same Mr. CLERY that I have above mentioned to distribute papers, and generally, to do every thing that he could do, calculated to rouse the people to active exertions in Parliamentary Reform.

But, I am aware that it will be said, that, with Sir Francis BURDETT, as well as with Lord GREY and Lord ERSKINE, a more mature age might have produced a change of opinion. It is very true, that Sir Francis BURDETT has made very great sacrifices to his principles, which age may have changed without any fault in him. But, then, it was his duty to tell us so, and not to lead hundreds of thousands of people on, to the very eve of the meeting of Parliament; nay, until the very hour of the Parliament's opening, and then to abandon them all to the mercy of their inveterate foes; and still to retain possession of that battery, whence another man with half his abilities, might have blown all those foes to atoms. If I return thus frequently to the abandonment of the cause by Sir Francis BURDETT, it is only on account of its necessity to our own justification. I am quite convinced, indeed, that, if he had done his duty; if he had met the ministers boldly upon the concluding part of



the Prince Regent's Speech; if he had brought forward such an amendment, as that which was brought forward by my Lord Cochrane, and which when moved, he was not present to second; if he had moved an adjournment of the debate, which he had it in his absolute power to carry; if he had amply discussed here, at the threshold, the question of the conduct of the Reformers, which he knew to be perfectly good; if he had here dared the ministers to the proof of their allegations; if he had here repelled all the falsehoods of the assertions and insinuations of our enemies; if he had exposed, in their true form and colour, the conduct of such men as Lord MILTON, Mr. ELLIOT, and some others; if he had, at subsequent periods of the proceedings, opposed the measures with zeal and resolution, not by now and then a speech in *general terms*, but by *Resolutions* drawn up with clearness and strength, amplified by interesting facts, and leading the mind on to practical conclusions; if he had done these things, which form only a part of what an able and zealous man would have done, in such a crisis, I do not say, that he would have prevented any of the measures from being adopted, though I do not know that he might not have succeeded even so far; but I am quite sure, that, if he had acted thus, he would have stricken so much terror into the hearts of our enemies,

and would have excited so much spirit in the people, that any measures that had been adopted would have fallen far short of those that were finally put in force.

If Sir Francis Burdett, or any of his friends, adopting the old *desponding strain*, which is always the sure symptom of disinclination for exertion; if he or they should treat this idea of mine as chimerical, and should say that it was perfectly useless to contend against the boroughmongers in this case; the first answer to this would be, why do you not then *give the thing up at once*? Why do you keep talking about this question of reform? If it be useless for you to carry on the contest in parliament, it certainly must be useless for us to be carrying on the contest out of doors, where we neither dare write or speak. Another answer is the good old maxim of men of pluck; namely, that men do not know what they can do till they *try*. Lord HOLLAND reminded the ministers of this maxim, when they said that the libel laws were not sufficient to keep us in check; "You have not tried those laws," said Lord HOLLAND; but the ministers had, it seems, been men of more hope than Sir Francis Burdett, for they said, "*We have tried*." "The law officers have tried, and they find that the authors of these cheap publications are too many for them; for which reason we demand new laws to assist us." So that, it ap-

pears, that they had not given the thing up as hopeless, till they had actually found themselves beaten. But a third answer is, that I think I can show reasonable grounds for believing that, if our cause had been fought with all the arms that it naturally furnished to Sir Francis, and with all the talent which he has at command, the dreadful measures against the people never could have been adopted.

You, my friends, know very well, that, at the opening of every session of parliament, the mover and seconder of the speech are fixed upon before hand ; that they hold consultations with the ministers ; that they are fully apprized for many days before the session opens of all that the speech is to contain ; that they have their lessons as completely as any servant has the terms of an errand on which he is sent ; and that their speeches are as much the speeches of the minister, as the king's speech is the speech of the minister. These facts are notorious to the whole nation. Now, then, observe, that the mover of the address at the opening of the last session, Lord VALLETORT, (whom I never heard of before,) abused the reformers in good set terms ; but he spoke very *doubtfully* as to its becoming necessary to adopt any measures at all pointed against us. The *seconder*, Mr. DAWSON, made use of words peculiarly worthy of attention in this case. "These demagogues," he said, "were

" like the fanatics of old, who went  
" about with the *bible in one hand and*  
" *a sword in the other*, preaching peace  
" and benevolence, while they meditated *war and bloodshed*." In which sentence, if the honourable gentleman did not justly describe *us*, he most aptly described our enemies ; for all the bible society people were flying upon us like so many vultures, and they it was, and not we, who had been seeking war and bloodshed abroad for so many years, and who now sought to employ the scourge of despotism at home. But, "he hoped, however, " that the good sense and loyalty of " the country would defeat the projects " of the demagogues, and that no " strong measures would be necessary " *to put them down*." Now, my friends, when you consider the capacity in which Mr. Dawson was when he uttered these words, I think it is impossible not for you to see, that, *up to this time*, the ministers had by no means made up their minds to propose *any strong measures at all*, much less such measures as they did at last propose. Indeed, if you look at all their own speeches, during the debate of the prince's speech, you will find nothing that does not tend to confirm this opinion. There is no question but that all their green-bag story was ready, and that they most anxiously wished to shut up the people's mouths, stop their pens, and to have every man's person placed at their mercy ; there is no



doubt but that this was their wish, and I think there is as little doubt of their not daring to propose it till they had felt the pulse of those who had the power to give a check to the accomplishment of that wish. But, when they had not heard one single voice in defence of the people; when they learnt, as they very speedily would, the curious history of the fox-hunting trip to Leicestershire, of the coming down to the parliament house door in a post-chaise from that county, while there was nobody to receive hundreds of petitions in St. James' Place except Sir Francis's porter; when they learnt all this curious history; when they heard speaker after speaker amongst the "gentlemen opposite" falling on upon the reformers with every species of calumny; when they saw lawyer Brougham amongst this group of dignified revilers; when they heard not one man to open his lips in defence of the reformers, except my Lord Cochrane; and when they saw Sir Francis not present to second an amendment which contained the only thing which was said in our defence; when they learnt, and when they saw all this, then they drew their lance, and came on us full speed. There were no longer doubts and hesitations. They knew before of the son's being in the standing army in time of peace; they knew of all that had passed at Brighton; they saw, in short, that they had got the muzzle upon the guardian

of the flock, and that they might fall on and devour it at pleasure.

My worthy friends, let us no longer be the dupes of men of ungovernable ambition, at the same time that their envies and their jealousies totally disable them from rendering any service to the country. In the history of the momentous events, concerning which I am addressing you, there is no circumstance of a tenth part of the importance as this abandonment of the people by Sir Francis BURDETT. No army ever owed its ruin to the disaffection of a general more decidedly than we owe our temporary defeat to this abandonment. Now, indeed, at the Westminster dinner, Sir Francis talks the matter well enough in some respects. But, when he talks of the people's *resisting*, he seems to have forgotten how little he seemed disposed to resist, when he might, as I have shown above, have done it with so much effect, and with so much safety. He sat silent while he saw the chains *forging* for us; he said very little while they were putting them round our hands and feet; but, now when he sees us safely manacled; now he hears our fetters rattle, and feels himself in a state of safety, (mark that?) he most courageously calls on us to *imitate our forefathers* and use the right of resistance! Sir Francis, my worthy friends, was the perpetual chairman of the famous *Hampden Club*, consisting, it was said, of a hundred gentlemen, who have amongst them landed estates

amounting to three hundred thousand pounds a year of rent. Before Sir Francis calls upon the People again to imitate their forefathers in exercising the right of resistance, let us hope he will show us the way by imitating the conduct of Hampden, and when he again talks of resistance before he has put in this claim to our confidence, let us ask him seriously whether he would advise the people to oppose their naked breasts to those bayonets, which it may become the military duty of his son to order to be plunged into those breasts.

Oh no! my friends, this big and unmeaning talk comes a little too late. When Sir Francis, at the last Westminster dinner, boasted of being surrounded "by so many *respectable* gentlemen," as he was pleased to call them, and grounded his confidence of final success upon *their* support, he did not recollect, perhaps, that there was not one single family, to which those respectable gentlemen belonged, who had not used their utmost exertions, including all manner of acts of foulness and of baseness, to prevent the electors of Westminster from having any more real voice in choosing their Representatives, than the people of Salisbury or of Winchester have. It is very well known to Sir Francis Burdett, that, until the *grand stir* which was made in Westminster by the gallant, though unfortunate, Mr. PAUL, and myself, aided by some excellent men in the middle

and lower walks of life, the people of Westminster were no more represented in Parliament than the people of Manchester now are. The great families of the two factions had come to a compromise many years before. One party put in one of the Members, and the other party put in the other. At the death of Mr. Fox the Whigs put in Lord PERCY. Sheridan wished to be put in, but the Duke of NORTHUMBERLAND carried too heavy mettle. He spoke in Parliament with seven mouths, but poor Sheridan had no mouth at all, unless some one was pleased to give him one. The Duke's triumph, however, was but short. The Parliament was dissolved, and at the general election the Whigs intended to put in Sheridan for their man, and the *Pittites* Sir Samuel HOOD. Mr. PAUL became a candidate on the popular ground: and though he was not returned member for Westminster; though SHERIDAN and Sir SAMUEL HOOD were returned, they went into Parliament so battered, so bruised, that when the next general election took place, which was at the end of a very few months, their old sores still smarted too acutely to suffer them to venture before the People again; and the great families on both sides, dreading a repetition of the strokes which they had received across the backs of their tools, thought it prudent to keep quiet, and to leave the People to themselves. It was at this



time that the fatal dispute arose between Mr. PAUL and SIR FRANCIS and though the former was guilty of very hasty conduct, and was by no means justified in putting Sir Francis's life in peril, I have always been one of those who thought him not fairly treated; and Sir Francis may be assured, that there are many persons, whose friendship he would yet be very sorry to lose, who have always thought and said the same. The truth is, that it was not true that Sir Francis disliked to make common cause with Mr. PAUL *on account of the expense*; how could it be so, when he had been so unsparing of money in his Middlesex elections! Nor could he dislike the public conduct nor the principles of Mr. PAUL; for, not only had he always expressed his approbation of both, but, at Mr. Paul's former contest against SHERIDAN, Sir Francis had most generously subscribed and punctually paid a thousand pounds *towards paying Mr. PAUL's expenses*. No, but Mr. PAUL was become *exceedingly popular*, and Sir Francis did not wish success to a rival in popularity. No matter for Mr. PAUL's inferior talents; and, surely, they were as much inferior to those of Sir Francis as those of SOUTHEY or GIFFORD are inferior to those of POPE, of whom GIFFORD, particularly, is the

imitator even to plundering. Mr. PAUL was nothing in point of talent, nor in point of weight of character, compared with Sir Francis BURDETT; but, still, he had the outward appearance of great popularity, and it was easy to perceive that his zeal, and personal courage, (of which no man that I ever saw possessed more,) his industry and his perseverance, would not have suffered that popularity to diminish. This was the cause, and the only cause, in my opinion, of the breach between them. Such, too, I am fully convinced, of the recent extraordinary conduct of Sir Francis with regard to the Spa-Fields meetings; with regard to the amendment proposed by my Lord COCHRANE; with regard to the petition of the boy DOGOOD; and, finally, with regard to the whole subject of Parliamentary Reform, of which he perceived that he had lived to see himself *not the only* great champion. To suppose that he could suffer his son to go into the army for interest sake; to suppose that he had suffered himself to be quieted by offers of titles; to suppose that he has been influenced by Coutt's million of money; to suppose that he has changed his opinion as to the question of Reform; to suppose any of these, is to do injustice to his mind even more than to his heart. As far as he may

have yielded to any of them, they have been *effect* and not *cause*. The great cause has been, the proofs which he daily witnessed, that, if the question of Reform was carried, he himself would soon be surpassed on that line where it was his ambition always to be at the head, and not only at the head, but so far a-head as to have no other near him, like those hounds, with the disposition of which he is well acquainted, and which, though the finest of the whole pack, will never hunt with the pack, and if they cannot keep a-head, will rather hang behind upon a *stale scent* than join in the general cry. This is just what he is doing at present ; but, again I tell him that he may be assured, that none of these Tavern Speeches, not all the big words which he can now muster up, will weigh as one feather against his failure of duty at the opening of the last session of Parliament.

It is not till since Sir Francis BURDETT saw so many able men rising up in the cause of Reform, that he has taken to that everlasting harping about the *importance of property*. It used to be the importance of *the people* ; the importance of the people's rights ; the importance of men's rights, *as men*. This was the language of no very great many months ago. But, now it is all *property*, it is the *country gentlemen*, it is the *gentlemen of property*. These are the persons that are now to be looked to, it seems, as the sole, or at least, as the great prop of the cause of Reform. These notions appear, upon my looking back into the speeches of Sir Francis BURDETT, to be wholly new in his mind ; and I am very sure that, both in theory and expected effect, they are altogether erroneous. Property does not consist solely in house and land, nor in goods and chattels ; nor in certificates of stock, like that of COURTTS ; nor in specie and bank-notes. Every man has property in the works of his hands, or in those of his mind. Would you call a fellow a man of property because he has a hut and a bit of ground worth forty shillings a year ; and set down as a man of no property, a physician, or a lawyer, who, though in constant practice, had neither house nor land, and not a second shilling in his pocket ? No, language is not to be thus abused for the sake of putting the ignorant possessors of landed estates above men of sense and talents, and making the former, in spite of nature as well as of justice, the lords and masters of mankind. Civil Society is built upon this basis, that the whole mass is to derive benefit from the wisdom which it con-



tains : and for it to derive benefit from that wisdom, men must be left freely to choose the most wise of the Society to manage its affairs. But, according to Sir Francis's present notions, the wisdom must lie in the acres of land, and then comes the monstrous absurdity of acting upon the principle that forty shillings worth of land ought to have as much voice as forty thousand shillings worth of land.

But, these absurdities are not the natural production of Sir Francis BURDETT's enlightened mind, they are the production of that unaccountable and that fatal jealousy, which induces him to do any thing rather than labour amidst *equals* in point of popularity. Gentle, kind, and benevolent, to all his inferiors in point of fortune ; no base aristocratical pride, that indulges itself in looking down with disdain upon the poor or the lowly born ; no envious feelings with regard to those who surpass him in extent or in value of estates. No ; this, all this, is too low for Sir Francis BURDETT ; but, in the race for popularity he will admit of no equal ; and, as it is impossible that he alone can accomplish the great work of the nation's deliverance ; the consequence of this fatal propensity of his mind is, that he has at last been a quick-sand

to that cause, of which he seemed destined by nature, as well as by the habits of his life, to be at once the corner stone and the ornament.

When Sir Francis Burdett talks again about the property of the country doing such famous things, I beg him to look over the list of those persons who subscribed the money to defray the expenses of his *Westminster Elections*. Will he find there a parcel of proprietors of estates ? Will he find there a set of seedling Boroughmongers, such as those of whose company he boasted at the last Westminster Dinner. Will he find there what he calls the *property* of the country ? No, he will find there none of the Bond-Street Bucks ; he will find there no fox-hunters who have sons in the standing army in time of peace ; he will find there no fundholders, and no army taylor's who keep packs of fox-hounds to treat the poor and proud ancient gentry to a chase now and then. He will find there, for the far greater part, tradesmen, who work for their bread ; honest, industrious, and public-spirited tradesmen, whose property consists in their capacity to labour, and who are men, not only of high and honourable minds, but of minds, too, far more enlightened than the insolent Boroughmonger broods, of whom he ap-

pears, lately, to have become so enamoured. This was the description of men all over England, and Scotland, and Wales, that raised and supported him. There were found upon the subscription list, the names of some few gentlemen of landed estates. Very few indeed, and those few marked out by the Boroughmonger tribe as Jacobins and levellers. Let Sir Francis Burdett, therefore, look over this list once more, and, I think, or, at least, I hope, that he will not, in future, insult us, by appearing to confine the quality of respectability to those who denominate themselves the "gentlemen of the country."

Besides, if *property* is to be made to consist in landed or in pecuniary possessions, let me ask Sir Francis BURDETT, upon what ground it is that Journeymen and Labourers are not only invited, but *compelled* to take up arms and venture their lives *in defence of the country*? If they are to be regarded as having no property, with what justice are they thus forced to leave their homes, their wives, children, and aged parents, and to waste

the prime of their lives, while they are submitting to all the hardships, all the restraints, and all the severities of a military life, and of military discipline? I should be glad if he would distinctly answer these questions, and tell us plainly at once, that the tradesmen, the farmers, the journeymen, and the labourers, are destined, in consequence of his divine right, to spill their blood in defence of his estates.

Oh no! He will not declare the affirmative of this proposition; and yet, it is a necessary deduction from all the doctrines which he has lately broached with regard to the pre-eminence of *property*, meaning, as he has clearly defined it, the proprietorship of landed estates. What? is not that man a slave to all intents and purposes, who, deprived of all political rights, deprived especially of the right of voting at elections, is still liable at any moment to be called forth to fight in defence of the possessions of others? To call such a man a *free man* is mockery. What was it, I would ask Sir Francis Burdett, which constituted the mark of *vassalage*? Why, it was that the vas-



sal was considered as having no property in his labour or in his capacity to labour, and that his lord could command him to come forth at any moment he chose to fight in the defence of that lord's possessions. If the people of England, who have no real property, that is to say, no property in house and land; if they are to be considered as having no property in their labour and in their capacity to labour; and if, notwithstanding this, they are still to be called forth to be liable to fight in defence of the country, they are not only in a state of vassalage to the proprietors of the houses and the land, but they are infinitely worse off than vassals, seeing that they have enormous taxes to pay, and that the vassals had no taxes at all to pay. What! will you tell a man that he has *no property*, at the very moment that you are calling upon him and compelling him to pay many pounds a year in taxes towards the support of peace and war establishments, and towards paying the interest of what is called the national debt? You have no property, you vagabond, but part of the

national debt is "due from you, and you shall pay one half of your earnings in taxes, or else you shall "go to jail." Will Sir *Francis Burdett* address this naked language to the People? As he certainly will not, let us hope that he will cease to put forth these new notions about the pre-eminence of landed property, and that he will return, and right speedily, too, to those notions, which brought from him the public declaration that, to induce the people to fight cordially for their country, *it was necessary to give them something to fight for?* As things then stood, he said, they had nothing worth fighting for, and yet he now talks about the rights of nothing but property in land; and distinctly dropes *his* reform in parliament, contrary to the prayers of People, and by which Reform he would exclude from all right of voting more than one half of the men who pay taxes, and nine tenths of those who are liable to be called upon to defend the country.

But, I must break off here, and leave for another letter all the tricks resorted to by the Ministers and their hirelings to impose upon the Country, and to make timid men believe, that

there was a plan on foot by the Reformers and others to subvert the Kingly Government, and to produce the destruction, or confiscation, of all property. In the mean while, I remain  
your sincere friend  
and obedient servant,  
WM. COBBETT.

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ERRATA in No. 13.

For Katerfields read Katterfelto, page 404, line 26.  
For discussion read disunion, page 405, line 39.  
For Granville read Grenville, page 411, line 13 and 16.